



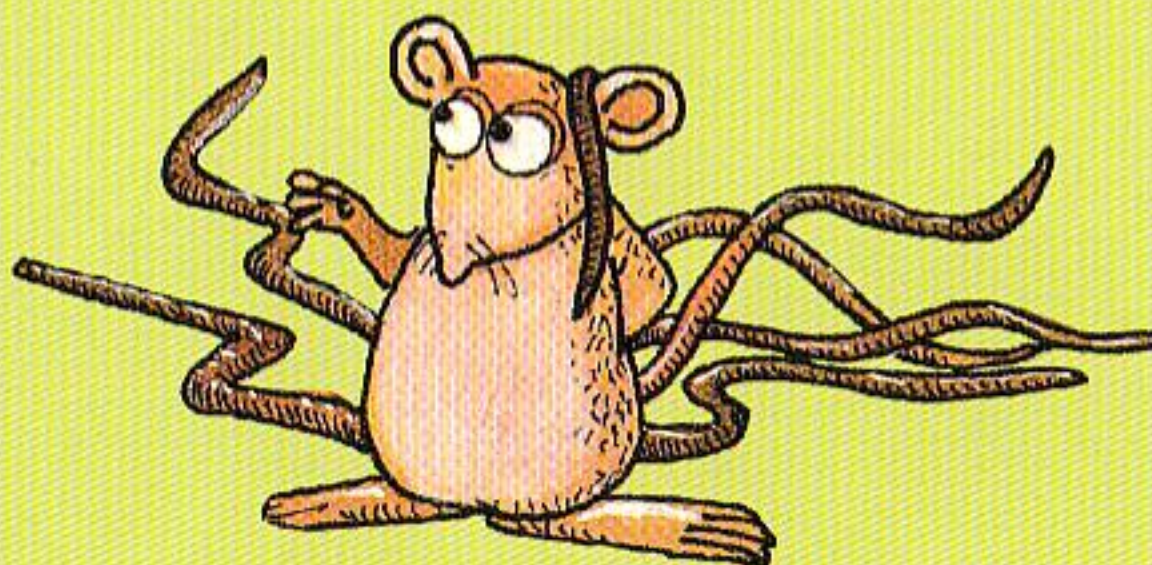
# The Mouse With Seven Tails

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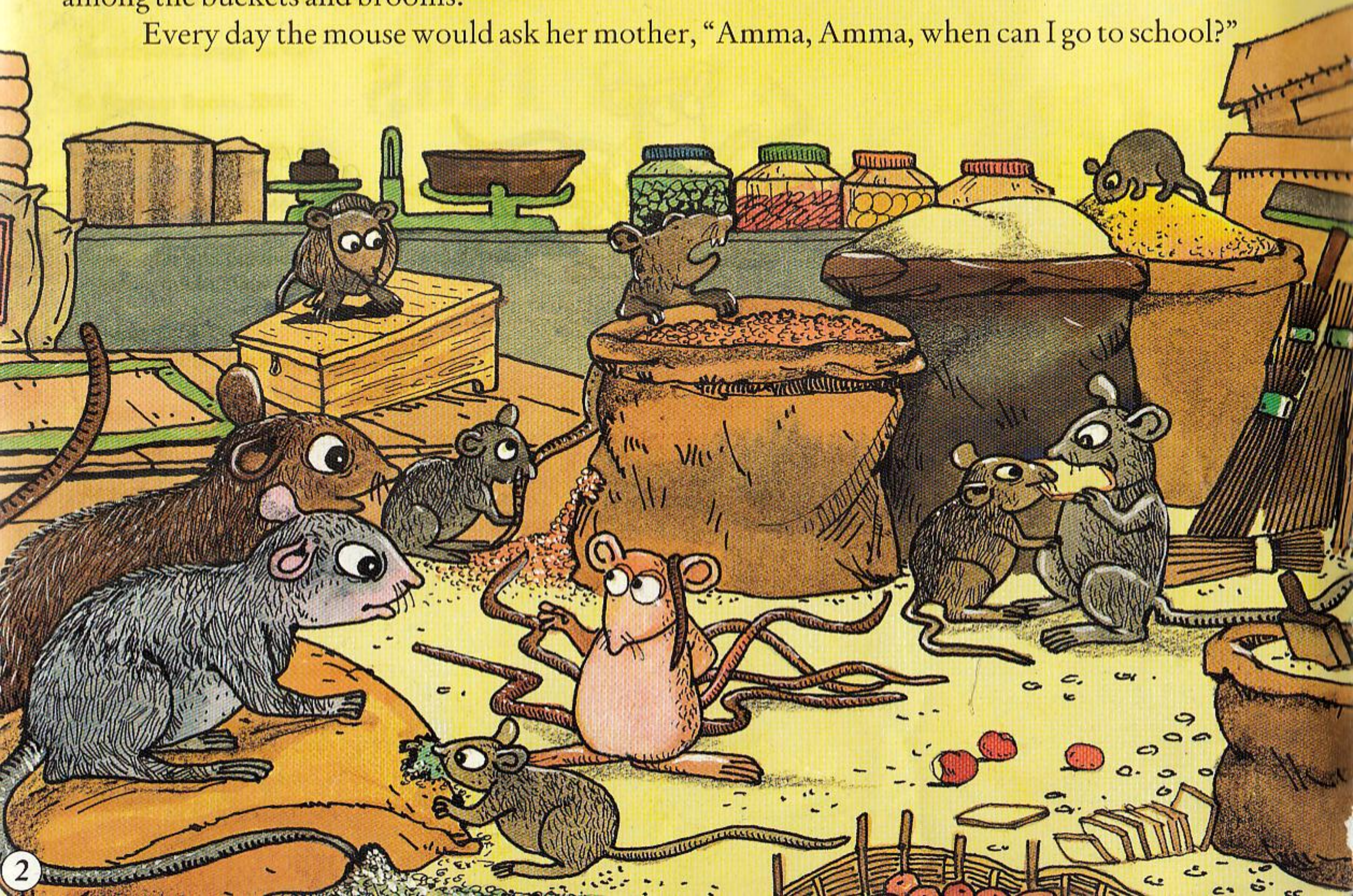
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Sanjay Sarkar



Once upon a time, there was a happy little mouse with seven tails. She lived near a big shop which sold wheat, rice, dal, bread and biscuits and also soaps and buckets and brooms. She and her family always had enough to eat and at night, she and her cousins loved playing hide and seek among the buckets and brooms.

Every day the mouse would ask her mother, "Amma, Amma, when can I go to school?"







And every day her mother would say, "You are still too small for school. I will send you to school when you are five years old." At last, the little mouse became five years old. Her seven tails became long and ratty and she liked to wave them one by one. She thought she was very special because she had seven tails. Her family decided to take her on a picnic for her birthday. There was a big garbage bin near their mouse hole and they thought it would be great fun to feast on potato peels and rotting apples and dried rotis for a change. Her aunt and uncle gave her a small bag of pop corn that they had dragged all the way from the popcorn vendor's cart. Her mother and father gave her a red cloth pouch in which she could snuggle down when the weather grew cold.



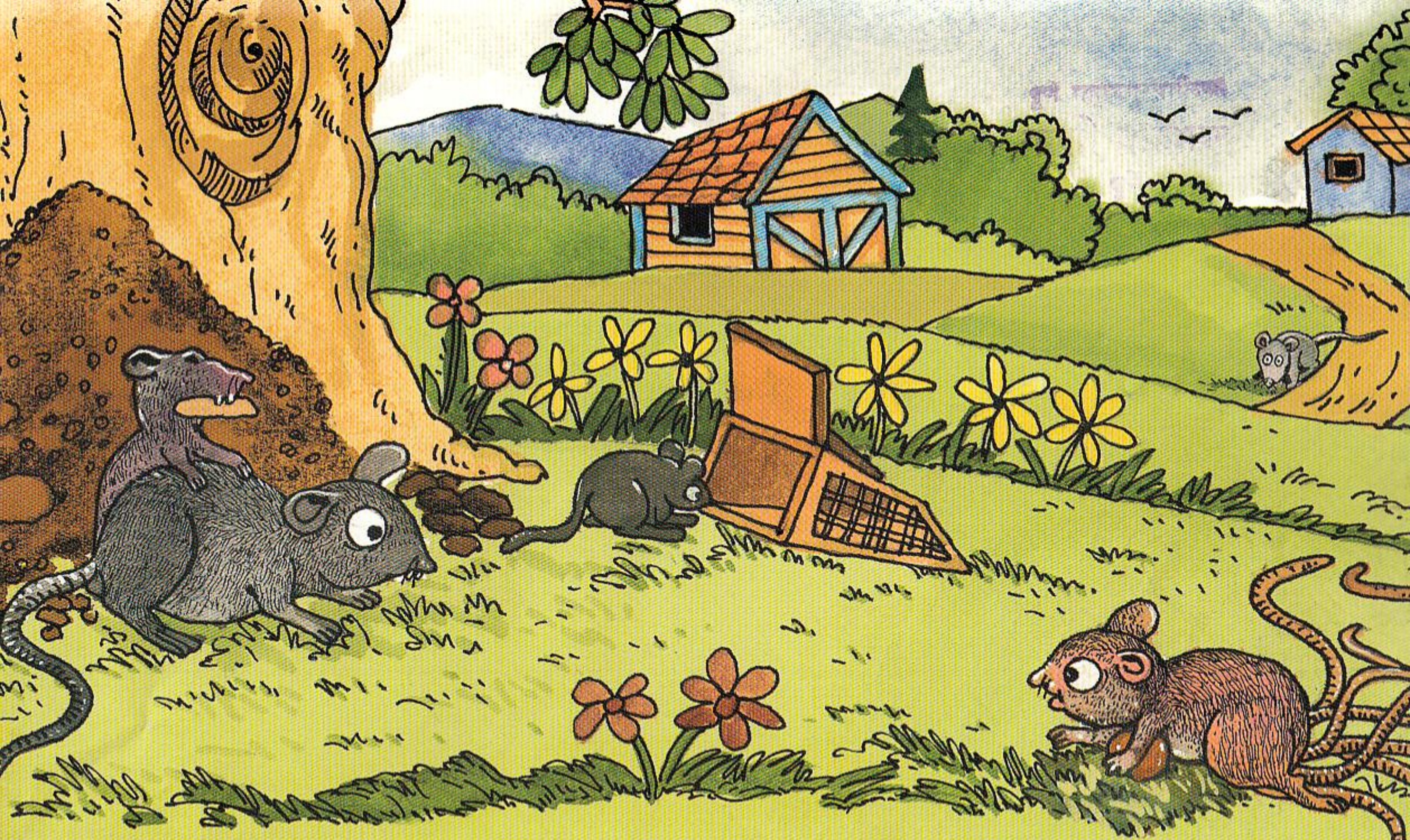
But the most special gift of all came from her grandmother. Long ago, a fairy had given Grandma Mouse the power to bestow wishes. She gave Little Mouse seven wishes for her birthday.

Grandma Mouse said, "Remember, Little Mouse, choose wisely when you make a wish. There are seven, and only seven wishes. Once they are gone, I cannot give you more."

Little Mouse promised she would use her wishes wisely.







The day after her birthday, the little mouse again asked her mother, “Amma, Amma, when can I go to school?”

And guess what? This time her mother said, “I will take you to school on Monday.”

On Monday, the little mouse's mother gave her a little bag full of dry crumbs of roti which she could eat when she got hungry.

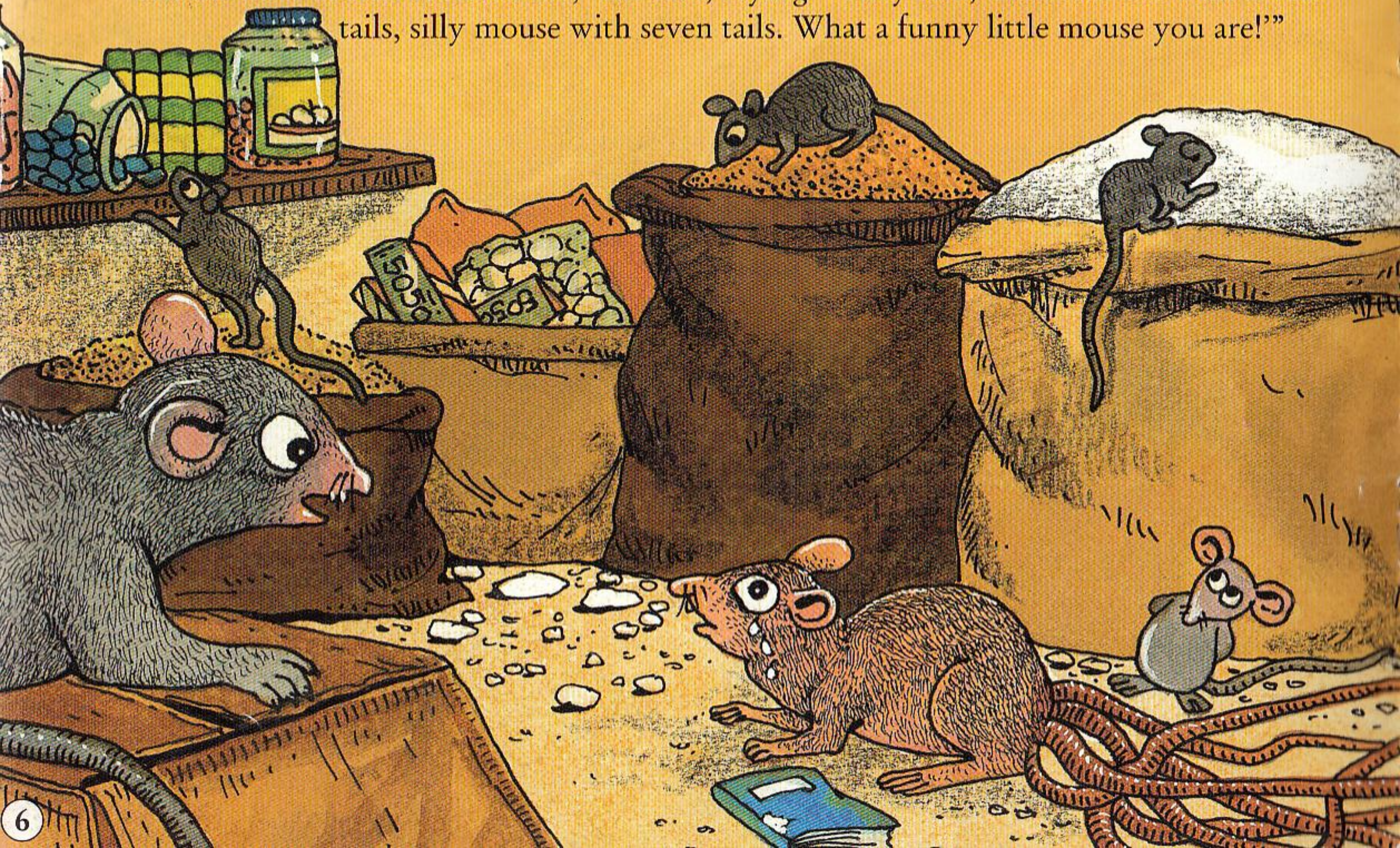
Then they both hurried off to school which was in a field near by. Her mother accompanied her to the edge of the field, after which the little mouse scampered off on her own.



She looked forward to an exciting first day. She had heard her cousins chatter and squeak about how they had learnt to take long jumps, burrow deep in the mud, gnaw their way through tough plastic and many other difficult tasks. The hardest lesson was learning how to steal food from mouse-traps without getting caught. But when the little mouse came home she looked very sad.

Her mother said, "What is the matter, little one, why are you so sad?"

"All the mice at school teased me," she said, crying. "They said, 'Little Mouse with seven tails, silly mouse with seven tails. What a funny little mouse you are!'"







Suddenly, Little Mouse stopped crying. She had an idea. She had remembered her seven wishes. "I wish one of my tails would go away," she said.

Immediately, one of her tails was gone.

"Now the other mice at school will not make fun of me," said Little Mouse.

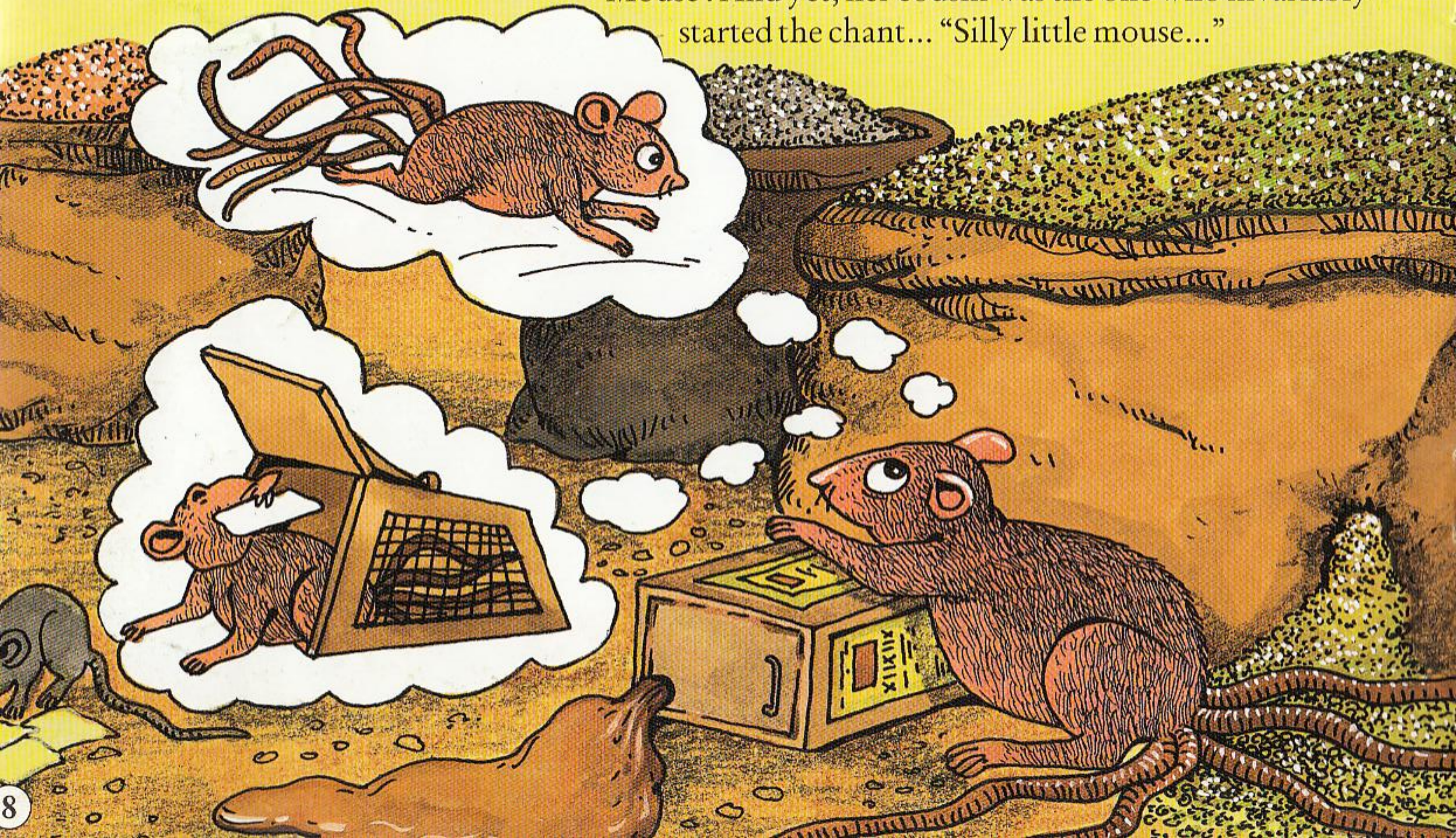
The next day, she went happily off to school.

But when she came home that day, Little Mouse was crying again. "Amma, Amma, the mice at school teased me. They said, 'Little Mouse with six tails, silly mouse with six tails. Oh,



what a funny little creature you are!” Then Little Mouse remembered her wishes. “I wish one of my tails would go away,” she said.

Immediately, another tail was gone, and Little Mouse had only five tails. “Surely now the other mice will not make fun of me,” she said. She was so upset by the mocking little rhyme the other mice had made up that she did not even notice that she was the cleverest mouse in her class. She was a natural jumper and so delicately did she gnaw the roti in the practice mouse trap that it had never snapped shut. Her cousin had to be rescued every day by the teacher, Big Brown Mouse! And yet, her cousin was the one who invariably started the chant... “Silly little mouse...”



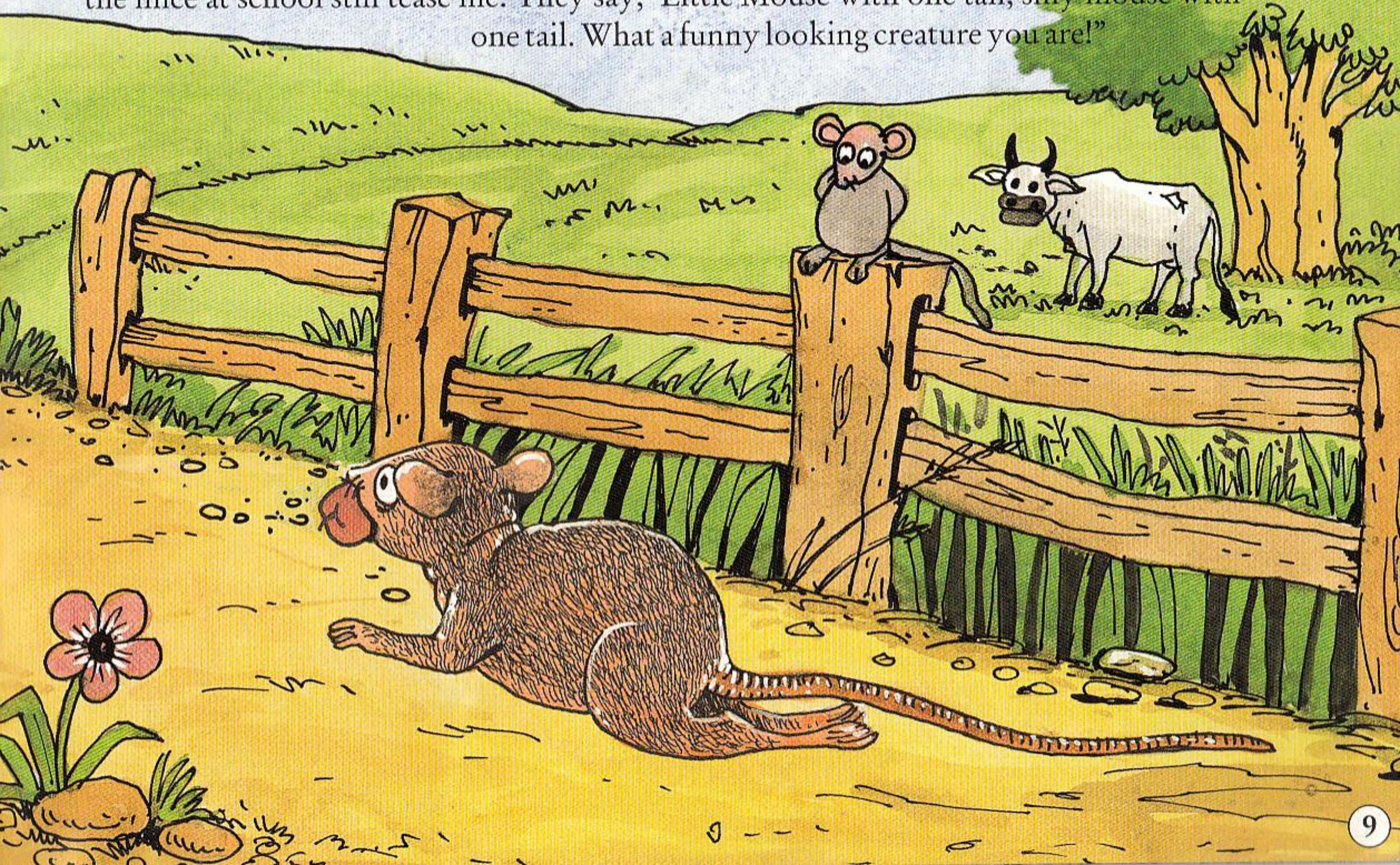


And so it went, on and on. Every day the little mouse came home crying, and then she would wish away another tail.

At last, one day her mother said, "You have only one tail left. Now you look like everyone else. No one will tease you any more."

And the little mouse went off to school happily waving her single ratty tail.

Again the little mouse came home crying and rubbing her eyes. "Amma, Amma," she said, "the mice at school still tease me. They say, 'Little Mouse with one tail, silly mouse with one tail. What a funny looking creature you are!'"



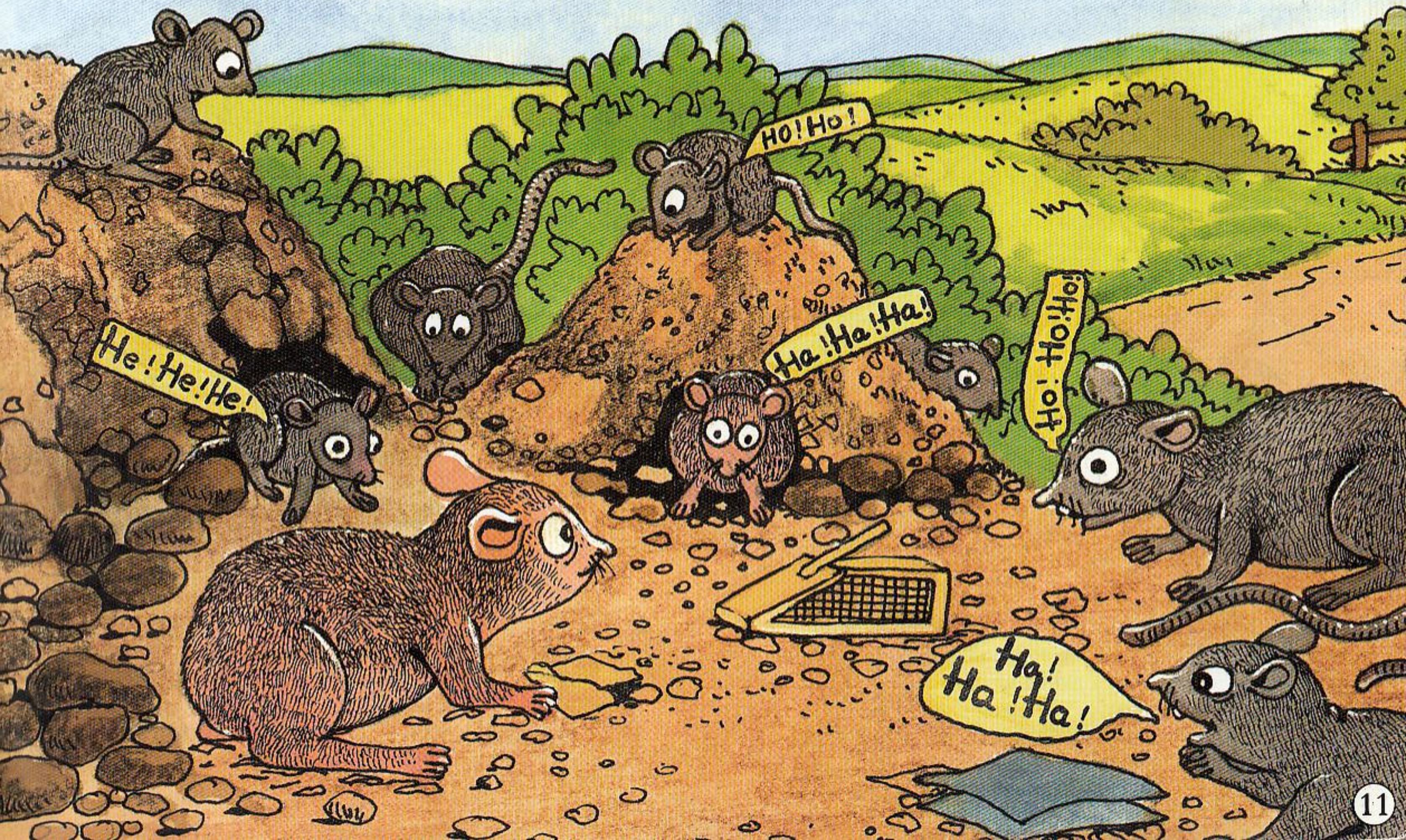




Little Mouse decided to use her seventh wish to get rid of her last tail. Her mother begged her not to wish away her tail, for then she would have no tail at all. But Little Mouse was sure that if she got rid of her tail, the other mice would stop teasing her, so she used her last wish, and her tail was quite gone.



Well, can you guess what happened then to the little mouse? She again came home crying, “Amma, Amma, the mice at school said, ‘Oh ho, little mouse with no tail. Oh ho, silly mouse with no tail. Oh, what a foolish little creature you are!’”





The little mouse begged her mother, "Amma, Amma, please give me a tail. If I have one tail I will look like everybody else."

Her mother shook her head sadly and said, "I am sorry, Little Mouse. You have used all your wishes and now you will forever be without a tail. You have learned an important lesson. Don't try to change yourself just to please other people. You must decide what is best for you and what makes you happy."





Most mice are happy with one ordinary tail. Little Mouse is happy because she has seven! But things change when she goes to school... Read this lovely tale of many twists and turns in its... tails!

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The Mouse With Seven Tails  
(English)

MRP: ₹ 25.00

ISBN 978-81-8263-241-7



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